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Annual overview report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination for 1998

Summary

The present report provides an overview of the work undertaken by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and its subsidiary bodies in 1998.

The introduction outlines major trends in the work of ACC during 1998, highlighting issues requiring the particular attention of intergovernmental bodies. Section II reviews the coordination issues addressed by ACC during the year. Section III outlines the programme of work of ACC for 1999, including the follow up actions that ACC intends to take to implement its recent conclusions.

During 1998, ACC undertook an assessment of the reforms under way in organizations of the United Nations system and their implications for system-wide coherence. It concluded that the system is increasingly acting in concert on key common concerns. The year was also marked by ACC's renewed emphasis on closer dialogue and stronger partnership between ACC and the intergovernmental bodies, particularly the Economic and Social Council.

The promotion of peace and sustainable development in Africa continued to be a major theme in the work of ACC during 1998. Members of the Committee issued a press statement to underscore their collective commitment to promote peace and development in Africa as a continuing priority in all their activities. They expressed support for a system-wide media and public information campaign to launch the International Year for the Culture of Peace in 2000. In line with efforts to strengthen the capacity of the organizations of the system

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to act in a mutually reinforcing and integrated manner in crisis situations and in the light of experience with applying a strategic framework approach in Afghanistan, ACC undertook to finalizing "generic guidelines" for the system's integrated response to crises. It also issued a statement on the challenges of globalization, stressing the commitment of ACC members to work together to monitor the impact of the Asian financial crisis and help countries to cope with the effects of the crisis.

ACC continued to address the problem of poverty eradication, issuing at the conclusion of its spring session a policy statement on the subject and endorsing a set of guidelines to foster inter-agency cooperation at the field level. As part of its continuing efforts to promote the integrated and coordinated follow-up to global conferences and summits, ACC reviewed ongoing inter-agency collaborative processes for the preparations for the five-year review of the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. It also adopted policy statements on gender equality, natural disaster reduction and drug control.

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I. Introduction

1. Major trends in the work of Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and its subsidiary machinery during 1998 are highlighted below. In line with the relevant recommendations of the Economic and Social Council and the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the present introduction provides an overview of activities undertaken by ACC machinery during the year to strengthen ACC support for the work of the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, and highlights major policy recommendations requiring Member States' attention.

2. Section II of the report contains an account of coordination issues addressed by ACC in the course of the year, while section III contains elements of the programme of work of ACC envisaged for 1999 and includes the main themes to be addressed in 1999.

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3. The previous annual overview report of ACC referred to a statement that the Secretary-General had made on 6 February 1998 to the Economic and Social Council on the work of ACC, in which he had described the Committee as a "unique instrument". He stated that:

> "In many ways, it is the symbol of unity of purpose of the system; of the decentralized, diverse, but united system that our founders envisaged as the instrument to harness the specialized capacities and constituencies of the various agencies to meet the economic and social objectives of the Charter. But ACC can and should be far more than a symbol. And I believe that we have only begun to exploit its potential: its potential as an instrument of leadership for the Secretary-General in bringing to bear the wide-ranging capacities of the system on the overall effort to advance security and development; its potential as a collective source of advice to intergovernmental bodies and as an instrument for pursuing in a comprehensive way intergovernmental mandates; and its potential as a source of support for individual organizations within the system, in the face of challenges that are beyond the capacity of any one of them to address" (see E/1998/21, annex I).

4. The Secretary-General returned to these themes in another statement to the Council at the beginning of the year. Placing the work of the Council and its interactions within the work of ACC in the context of the efforts of the international community "to keep pace with an ever more globalizing world", he noted that "globalization draws us together. It expands markets and opens the world. But globalization also compounds risks and uncertainties. One of the great challenges of our times is to manage and minimize these risks and uncertainties". In that context, he referred to the transformation that both the Council and ACC are undergoing as an integral part of the effort to help prepare the system to meet this global challenge. Reviewing the many new initiatives that the Council has successfully undertaken in 1998, the Secretary-General noted that this rejuvenation of the Council has been parallelled and encouraged by a new spirit of motivation and a growing culture of consultation and cooperation in ACC. The Secretary-General went on to cite, as illustrations of the progress being made by the Committee in realizing the potential he had highlighted in his previous statement to the Council, the attention given by ACC to the implications of the global financial crisis and the response of the United Nations system, resulting in a commitment by ACC members to joint action, with full involvement of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF); and the renewed focus in ACC's work on global issues and priorities which cut across functional and institutional responsibilities and are crucial to advancing peace-building and development — from poverty eradication and human rights to gender equality, population, international drug abuse control and natural disaster reduction.

5. Emphasizing that the reform of ACC itself is an integral part of the overall reform of the United Nations system, the Secretary-General referred to a number of specific measures taken by ACC which underlie the commitment of ACC executive heads to make the Committee a centerpiece of a more united and effective system and to ensure that the inter-agency machinery maximizes its contribution to the policy coordination efforts of the Council. He highlighted, in this context, the strong support provided by the organizations of the system to new arrangements, through the new Office for Inter-Agency Affairs, to strengthen substantive services to ACC and its subsidiary bodies and to promote more systematic exchanges of information on strategic issues at the inter-agency level; the formation of ad hoc consultative mechanisms involving groups of executive heads around major issues or objectives of common concern; and the renewed attention being given by the system to strengthening links with civil society. These are detailed in section II below.

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6. The wide-ranging cooperation and partnership between ACC and the intergovernmental bodies was fully evident in the increased interaction between the ACC machinery and the system of functional commissions of the Council. In the course of the year, ACC's subsidiary bodies intensified their

support for the work of the functional commissions. They prepared reports, convened expert group meetings and provided technical inputs for consideration by these bodies. The ACC machinery also reinforced follow-up action to monitor and promote implementation within the system of the outcomes of the Council and its functional commissions. The enhanced partnership between the functional commissions and ACC subsidiary bodies can be seen in the following examples:

(a) Throughout 1998, the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE) continued to serve as the main channel for coordinating inter-agency support to the Commission on the Status of Women on women and gender-related issues. As a major part of the follow-up to the Beijing and Nairobi conferences on women, IACWGE prepared the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women. This was submitted to the Council through the Commission by the Secretary-General in his capacity as Chairperson of ACC. The system-wide plan represents a general framework for inter-agency cooperation to achieve intergovernmental objectives and serves as a tool for the Commission to assess the progress of the system in undertaking follow-up action. In 1998, the Commission also endorsed a proposal of IACWGE to convene a workshop on a rights-based approach to gender equality, the findings of which were then reported back to the Commission. The Commission also drew from the work of the inter-agency gender mission to Afghanistan in its consideration of the issue;

(b) Likewise, the Inter-Agency Committee for Sustainable Development (IACSD) also gave priority attention during the year to preparing and reviewing issues of direct relevance to the work of the Commission for Sustainable Development. At its two sessions in 1998, IACSD considered, *inter alia*, a number of initiatives relating to the issue of freshwater management and the preparation for the special session to review the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and provided to the Commission, through the reports of the Secretary-General, a wide range of inputs for its consideration. IACSD also considered modalities for enhancing inter-agency support for the discussion on energy, which is to take place in the Commission in 2001, and decided to establish to that end an ad hoc inter-agency task force on energy. Noting that the task manager system established by IACSD has proved to be an effective system-wide vehicle for the implementation of the commitments made at Rio and continues to receive general support of Member States, ACC requested the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) to give active consideration to broaden its application to other areas of collaboration and coordination within the United Nations system, including in regard to the thematic outcomes of other global conferences;

(c) Similarly, fruitful interactions were pursued in 1998 between the Commission on Population and Development and the ACC Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections. The work of the Commission and cross-fertilization between the Commission and the ACC Subcommittee centre on the annual *World Population Monitoring Report*, which has a particular focus each year on a given theme. Inter-agency expert group meetings and publications also contribute to the work of the Commission. The most notable examples in 1998 were the expert group meetings on the demographic impact of the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic and on international migration;

(d) The work of the Commission for Social Development, especially in regard to the review of the implementation and follow-up of the decisions taken at the World Summit for Social Development, was also strongly supported by inter-agency participation, particularly through expert workshops on social services and on different aspects of social integration;

(e) Interaction between the Statistical Commission in its function of coordinating the international statistical system and the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities remained particularly active. Extensive inter-agency collaboration took the form of task forces which resulted in in-depth reports to the Commission on national accounts, international trade statistics, service statistics and finance statistics. In view of the crucial importance — repeatedly stressed at the intergovernmental level as well as by ACC — of rationalizing and ensuring coherence in the development of indicators for monitoring the follow-up activities and the achievements of the targets and goals set by the global conferences, the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities is contributing to an inventory of development indicators to determine their state of production and dissemination within and outside the United Nations system, and to the establishment of a development indicators website. Inter-agency collaboration in this area is also being strengthened in support of the consideration of these issues by the Council in May 1999;

(f) The work of CCPOQ during 1998 made a major contribution to the design, elaboration and review of the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities. The Committee was able to bring together its

members' views on the triennial review, and their contributions to its preparation. This in turn facilitated consideration of the triennial review by both the Council and the General Assembly and the adoption of the related General Assembly resolution. CCPOQ and its working group on the resident coordinator system also addressed and are continuing to address a number of issues dealt with by the review which are central to United Nations operational activities. These include guidelines for national execution, the programme approach and the administrative management of the resident coordinator system; and system-wide collaboration on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) pilot phase and on development of the UNDAF guidelines;

(g) CCPOQ also contributed actively to the adoption by ACC of joint statements or conclusions in key areas of policy concern of the General Assembly and the Council and its functional bodies, such as poverty alleviation, action to combat drugs, and response to and recovery from crisis. In turn, these statements and conclusions are translated into common guidance for the resident coordinator system, thus contributing to more focused and coherent operational activities, in line with the objectives of the comprehensive policy review.

7. Another major issue addressed by ACC during 1998 was the system's response to the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318). This was taken up at the first ACC session of 1998, at which executive heads expressed strong support for a comprehensive, holistic approach to addressing security and development in Africa. The outcome of ACC deliberations on the report should assist the Council in its consideration of the subject at its 1999 coordination segment: "Development in Africa: implementation and coordination follow-up by the United Nations system of initiatives on African development".

Main policy recommendations made by ACC during 1998

8. ACC deliberations on the many issues it addressed in 1998 resulted in a wide range of policy recommendations. Three topics — poverty, globalization and Africa — received particular consideration, and the related recommendations deserve to be highlighted here as they raise policy issues requiring the special attention of Member States:

(a) **Poverty.** ACC issued a statement of commitment for action to eradicate poverty dated 20 May 1998. This calls for action by Governments and all other development actors to address poverty on a broad front, and to achieve sustainable reduction of poverty through accelerated, sustainable, equitable, employment intensive and pro-poor economic growth. ACC called upon the international community to extend full support to countries pursuing sound macroeconomic policies and economic reform to balance growth with social investments. ACC expressed its determination to fully support countries in the elaboration and implementation of effective, national development strategies geared to the elimination of poverty, and urged that policies and conditions be put in place to create a supportive international environment;

(b) **Globalization**. Calling for common action to tackle development challenges arising from globalization and the adverse effects of the financial crisis, ACC members committed themselves to working together to monitor the impact of the crisis on societies and individuals, help individual countries carry out the necessary structural and institutional reforms, and strengthen or build basic social services, livelihood opportunities and safety nets for the least fortunate. It was emphasized that equity and social justice, beyond their inherent value, are also necessary for political and financial stability. ACC expressed its concern about the further marginalization of the poorest countries and regions, especially Africa, and called upon the international community to extend all possible assistance to its weakest members to enable them to successfully integrate into the world economy;

(c) **Africa**. ACC endorsed the general thrust of the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, and expressed its support for a comprehensive and holistic approach to conflict resolution, peace-building, development and democracy-building. It stressed the importance of ensuring that there is not, as a result of the financial crisis affecting various countries and regions, a lessening of support for Africa and of regional and national efforts to promote its development. ACC appealed to the international community to exercise the necessary political will and unity of purpose in supporting the efforts of the Governments and peoples of Africa to address the challenges of peace and sustainable development.

II. Coordination issues addressed by ACC in 1998 brought to the attention of intergovernmental bodies

A. Challenges of globalization

9. In the light of the financial turmoil in Asia, ACC, at its fall 1998 session, examined the challenges arising from globalization and considered its consequences at the global and national levels and its implications for the system as a whole. ACC detected signs of hope that the world is beginning to emerge from the crisis but felt that the danger of the crisis worsening remains real. It underlined that effects of the financial turmoil could be felt long after the crisis was over, that no country is immune and that these events threaten to unravel much of the social progress achieved over the last 40 years. There is also an urgent need to bring immediate help to those suffering from acute hardship but also to address long-term issues. ACC agreed that the United Nations system must act jointly, with vigour and determination, both globally and especially at the country level.

10. ACC committed itself to work together to monitor the impact of the crisis on societies and individuals, help individual countries carry out the necessary structural and institutional reforms, and strengthen or build basic social services, livelihood opportunities and safety nets for the least fortunate. It emphasized that equity and social justice, beyond their inherent value, are also necessary for political and financial stability.

11. ACC welcomed the World Bank proposal to work with other organizations of the system towards comprehensive development frameworks led by the Government of the country concerned. These would cover such areas as infrastructure, human development, poverty eradication, the balance and interaction between urban and rural economies, and the environment, as well as social safety nets. It also undertook to forge closer links between the United Nations and World Bank arrangements for development support at the country level.

B. Poverty eradication

12. Action to combat poverty was another major focus of the work of ACC in 1998. In the light of preparatory work within ACC and its subsidiary machinery identifying policy measures and their core operational components relevant to a concerted approach to poverty reduction, as well as possible areas of inter-agency collaboration, ACC issued a policy statement (E/1998/73) reaffirming its commitment to action to eradicate poverty. The statement stressed that poverty eradication — a main underlying theme of recent global conferences — is a key international commitment and a central objective of the United Nations system. ACC committed itself to take further collective policy approaches and collaborative actions in this crucial area. The paradox of globalization is that while so much progress has been achieved in such a short time in lifting hundreds of millions out of poverty, at the same time more than one billion people still live on less than one dollar a day and almost three billion on less than two dollars.

13. ACC emphasized that fundamentally poverty was a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It meant lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. ACC expressed its conviction that this situation is unacceptable since the world has the resources and the capacity, if it chooses, to eradicate absolute poverty. ACC saw in the current global environment a real chance to qualitatively improve the conditions of life for the vast majority of people who live in poverty. ACC noted that poverty is a global phenomenon. Widespread in developing countries, it also affects industrial societies and is growing in countries with economies in transition. Poverty must be addressed in all its manifestations.

14. ACC recognized that poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon and that the challenge of its eradication is vast and complex. Building effective partnerships, particularly at the country level, is vital. Member States, at the national and international levels, have the primary responsibility in that regard. The challenge is to harness the forces of global integration, while at the same time avoiding the risks of economic polarization, social exclusion and growing inequalities. ACC also noted that eradication of poverty is today an indispensable condition for lasting peace. In addition to concerting its own actions, the United Nations system must also play a supportive and catalytic role in mobilizing the energies and resources of all development partners — Governments, the private sector, civil society, donors and above all the poor themselves — in the campaign against poverty. ACC acknowledged that education and capacity-building are major driving forces in development since they are the key to any process of social empowerment. ACC emphasized that in dealing with poverty, gender equality and the empowerment of women are major cross-cutting issues that must receive sustained attention. A large majority of the poor in developing countries reside in rural areas and depend mainly on agriculture for their livelihood

and employment. Women and children contribute significantly to food production and yet they are often the main victims of poverty. Strategies to eradicate poverty must therefore examine the differential impact of policies and programmes on men and women as well as on adults and children.

15. ACC recalled that the international community has set itself a range of interlocking development goals which, taken together, address the overarching challenge of poverty eradication. These cover reductions in income, child mortality, maternal mortality and child malnutrition as well as improvements in life expectancy and access to basic social services, especially among women.

16. ACC underscored that poverty cannot be eradicated without transparent and accountable government at all levels. Democratization and enhanced protection of human rights are key components of good governance. Good governance also implies a proper balance of actions between the State, the private sector, civil society and the communities themselves. Good governance requires the empowerment of the poor, their active involvement and participation in poverty reduction strategies and improved access by the poor to well functioning institutions, such as those in the political and judicial systems, that safeguard people's rights.

17. ACC stressed the critical importance of sound macroeconomic policies as well as economic reforms that balance growth with social investment for achieving accelerated and sustained economic growth, without which a sustained reduction in poverty is not possible. ACC noted that sustainable industrial development policies that improve competitiveness while protecting the environment and creating productive employment, are an important component of a sound policy framework. Growth, while necessary, is not sufficient by itself for rapid poverty reduction; it should be equitable, employment intensive, underpinned by sound policies to promote social justice, redress social inequities and be pro-poor.

18. ACC directed its subsidiary machinery to give priority attention to actions and instrumentalities that maximize the support of the system to the elaboration and implementation of development strategies geared toward poverty reduction.

19. The state of the work of the ACC machinery in this area was transmitted to the resident coordinators in December 1998, with a request that they report on progress in collaborative work at the field level on poverty eradication in their annual reports.

C. Causes of conflict and promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa and the United Nations system-wide initiative on Africa

20. In considering follow-up to the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318), ACC expressed full support for the Secretary-General's call for a comprehensive, holistic approach to all peace-building, development and democracy-building activities in Africa, and accepted the challenge of helping to generate the necessary political will to implement that approach. It noted that in addressing the economic and social needs of Africa, it is important to give the necessary attention to actions relating to capacity-building and infrastructure development and to the development and application of science and technology. ACC identified other issues requiring special attention, including a qualitative focus on governance, the setting-up of mechanisms geared to enhancing human security, new ways of funding reintegration activities in the transition from conflict to peace-building, and the impact of population growth and distribution. ACC stressed that furthering the goals and objectives of the report require the full commitment and participation of all parties. This requires close interaction with political leaders, parliaments and civil society organizations in individual countries, as well as the full involvement of regional and subregional organizations. In this context, ACC welcomes the proposal of the Secretary-General to convene national conventions on economic restructuring and reform in countries requiring serious adjustment programmes.

21. ACC agreed that issues relating to peace and development in Africa should continue to receive its priority attention and that its future discussions on this issue should be focused around well defined topics or clusters of policy issues to be addressed so as to facilitate agreement on common actions to be taken. It further decided:

(a) That the Secretary-General's report will be brought to the attention of the various governing bodies of the system as part of the common effort to mobilize the necessary political will;

(b) That strategic and policy analyses relevant to the peace-building and development objectives set out in the report will be more systematically shared, through existing mechanisms, among the organizations of the system;

(c) To ask the relevant inter-agency mechanisms, including the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and both

CCPOQ and IACSD, to give attention to ways of pursuing the objectives set out in the report; and to review Africa related inter-agency mechanisms, including those established in connection with the United Nations Special Initiative on Africa, with a view to facilitating the harmonization of Africa-related initiatives;

(d) To strengthen inter-agency consultations, through existing mechanisms, in connection with the preparation of and follow-up to international and bilateral donor initiatives relating to Africa.

22. ACC also issued a press statement emphasizing the importance of focusing on the challenge of peace and prosperity in Africa and reducing its vulnerability — recognizing the crucial relationship between sustainable development, good governance, respect for human rights and durable peace. ACC reaffirmed that peace and prosperity must be sought as a single objective, with equal priority and equal persistence, emphasizing the broader nature of human security and the diverse ways in which it must be pursued.

23. In its press statement, ACC expressed its full support for a comprehensive and holistic approach to conflict resolution, peace-building, development and democracy-building. It also agreed that there should be no lessening of support for Africa and of the regional and national efforts to promote its development programmes, at a time when the attention of the international community was focused on the financial crisis and the countries and regions most affected. This commitment to recovery and sustainable development must continue to be implemented in full partnership with African leaders, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), subregional intergovernmental organizations, other institutions and civil society at large.

24. ACC also expressed its concern over the many multifaceted and complex challenges Africa is currently facing, which include poverty eradication and environmental sustainability. Within that context, ACC expressed serious concern over HIV/AIDS and its devastating consequences, and underlined the urgency for concerted action.

25. ACC welcomed the support of the international community to ongoing initiatives to address the problems of Africa, such as the United Nations Special Initiative for Africa and the Tokyo International Conferences on African Development. ACC also appealed to the international community to exercise the necessary political will and unity of purpose in supporting the efforts of the Governments and peoples of Africa to address the challenges of peace and sustainable development.

D. Culture of peace

26. In 1997, the General Assembly proclaimed the year 2000 the International Year for the Culture of Peace, and in 1998 it declared the period 2001–2010 the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. The primary objective of proclaiming the year 2000 the International Year for the Culture of Peace was to mobilize public opinion at the national and international levels for the purpose of establishing and promoting a culture of peace and the central role that the United Nations system could play in this regard.

27. A culture of peace encompasses all the values, attitudes and forms of behaviour that reflect respect for life, human beings and their dignity, and all human rights, the rejection of violence in all its forms and commitment to the principles of freedom, justice, solidarity, tolerance and understanding among people and between groups and individuals.

28. ACC members agreed that the concept was at the heart of the work of the United Nations system, and emphasized that the promotion of a culture of peace should be regarded as a continuing objective, extending beyond the designated year.

29. ACC agreed to: (a) ensure, through the utilization of existing mechanisms, the preparation of a system-wide media and public information strategy for the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace; and (b) ensure continuous exchange of information, on a system-wide basis, on activities to be undertaken in follow-up to the decisions of the General Assembly on the draft declaration and programme of action.

30. ACC also agreed that the International Year for the Culture of Peace should be launched at all United Nations system headquarters and field offices, to the extent possible, on the International Day of Peace, 14 September 1999.

E. Peace-building: strategic framework

31. At its April 1997 session, ACC agreed to launch a strategic framework process through which the system would promote a more integrated, coherent and unified approach to planning a system-wide response to emergencies and to facilitating recovery. The strategic framework is to comprise integrated and coordinated actions for addressing any combination of political, military, humanitarian, human rights, environmental, economic, social, cultural and demographic factors. The objective is to ensure that conflict

is prevented or resolved on a lasting basis, and that the process of long-term and sustainable development is in place and is not interrupted, where possible, or is resumed as expeditiously as possible. ACC recognized that political, humanitarian, economic and social factors cannot, in most situations, be effectively dealt with independently of one another, and are best addressed in an holistic and mutually reinforcing manner. ACC agreed that within this context, the aim should be to mobilize a timely and well coordinated system-wide response to potential and actual crisis situations, tailored to the requirements of each particular case.

32. At its spring 1998 session, ACC considered a draft strategic framework for Afghanistan, resulting from a mission to the country and ensuing consultations, together with a draft assistance strategy for Afghanistan as well as draft generic guidelines for strategic frameworks. The Secretary-General stressed the importance that he attaches to strengthening the capacity of the United Nations system to act in a mutually reinforcing and integrated way in crisis situations. In this context, he noted that the strategic framework process has potentially far-reaching implications for the system and should be regarded as an integral part of the ongoing reform effort.

33. In its review, ACC noted the especially difficult circumstances characterizing the Afghanistan context. ACC agreed that in developing the process further, due account should be taken of existing mechanisms and structures (CCPOQ, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Consolidated Appeals Process, etc.). ACC welcomed the decision by the Secretary-General to entrust the Deputy Secretary-General, with the responsibility for steering the further development of strategic framework initiatives. It also noted that the Deputy Secretary-General intended to ensure that the lessons learned and resulting generic guidelines would be widely shared and acted upon in a wholly participatory manner.

34. At its fall session, ACC was briefed on the implementation of the Afghanistan strategic framework and on the work by CCPOQ to develop "generic guidelines" for response to and recovery from crisis. The Deputy Secretary-General indicated that she would continue to consult with ACC members on the generic guidelines and also on the selection of countries where the strategic framework approach might be usefully applied.

F. ACC review of reform processes and their implications for the work of ACC

35. ACC pursued, during the course of the year, its consideration of the reform processes under way in the organizations of the system, endeavouring to arrive at an initial assessment of their contribution to enhancing the system's overall effectiveness, and in that context of their implications for the future direction of ACC's own work. The assessment dealt with the contribution of these processes to furthering the objective of refocusing the work of organizations on the core areas of their comparative strength, while at the same time promoting greater inter-agency collaboration and complementarity in addressing the increasingly complex challenges confronting the international community.

36. ACC noted that most of the reform processes undertaken within the system have among their prominent common features the adoption of new or revised mission statements; more selective criteria for priority setting; decentralization and greater delegation of authority, coupled with centralized strategic planning; and rationalization of the governance machinery — all contributing to more focused activities and sharpening capacities to respond to emerging requirements in the respective areas of competence of the various organizations, and thus helping advance the goal of establishing a clearer division of labour system-wide.

37. Another important common feature of these reform processes has also been a strong emphasis on broadening partnerships within the system, as well as with other international organizations and the wider civil society. Underlying this renewed emphasis on partnerships is the growing recognition, at both the secretariat and intergovernmental levels, that the challenges posed by the new international environment require integrated responses which are beyond the capacity of any one organization within the system. In the words of the President of the Economic and Social Council for 1998, it is simply not possible to pursue independent sectoral policies to deal with integrated, multifaceted and systemic problems.

38. These being the main features of the policy outlook underlying most of the reform processes, they obviously carry at least the potential of converging in making the different parts of the system complement each other in a more effective manner in a way that can significantly strengthen the system's overall performance. Fully realizing this potential will require a further deliberate effort to ensure that the implementation of the new mission statements benefits from collective inputs, and proceeds on the basis of

careful programming along clear common priorities so as to maximize productive partnerships around synergies and complementarities.

39. Turning to the implications for its own work, ACC was fully conscious of its responsibilities and of the key role it is called upon to play to contribute to the realization of this potential. This role has two dimensions. The first is geared to nurturing the new culture of dialogue and consultation that is taking hold within the system as an integral part of these reform processes. The second is geared to supporting intergovernmental coordination processes, chiefly through the Economic and Social Council but also through decision-making processes in the governing bodies of the organizations of the system so as to ensure that the two dimensions converge in advancing policy coherence and contributing to overall system-wide effectiveness. Relevant discussions in ACC focused on ways to strengthen the preparatory process for substantive discussions in ACC; better project the outcome of the work of ACC to member States and the public; and strengthen the impact of inter-agency work at the intergovernmental level.

40. ACC members shared the Secretary-General's view that in a rapidly changing world, the dialogue among executive heads cannot be confined to two annual meetings if it is to focus on the development of common responses to emerging system-wide priorities. To this end, ACC members must maintain continuous communication within groups of organizations addressing together a given issue, and among all members in assessing the overall challenges that the system is facing. It was understood that renewed emphasis on the role that ACC is called upon to play to identify common priorities for joint action does not necessarily imply a rigid, top-down approach to the elaboration of the inter-agency agenda. It was noted, in this context, that some of the most successful or promising activities have been the result of initiatives by groups of organizations which spontaneously saw that they needed each other to achieve some key objectives. The initiative on rolling back malaria is an excellent example. At the same time, the importance was recognized for the United Nations system, through ACC, to strengthen its capacity to maintain an overview so as to promote complementarity in the direction of reforms, and to facilitate and encourage joint action and inter-agency efforts focused on priority objectives which could maximize the system's overall impact on peace-building and development.

41. ACC members agreed that uninterrupted flows and exchanges of information at both the executive head and working levels are crucial. In particular, with regard to the ongoing reform processes, it was stressed that organizations could gain from and should build on each other's experience. In the same context, ACC considered that a renewed effort should be made to systematically exchange information on new policy directions, as well as on strategic plans and new programme priorities being adopted by the various organizations. In this way, all organizations could complement and contribute to such initiatives and set their own orientations and priorities in full awareness of the directions that other parts of the system were taking. The new Office for Inter-Agency Affairs and the electronic communication and network systems being developed will facilitate these processes.

42. In the same context, it was agreed that a participatory process of continuous consultations should be set in motion to elaborate the ACC agenda and prepare its discussions. ACC should take up issues that capture the interest of the governing bodies of the system and the international community at large. To the same end, the outcomes of the ACC discussions should take the form of communiqués, as appropriate, aimed at having a policy impact on Governments and civil society. One challenge is to find ways to disaggregate issues so that they could be the subject of specific policy conclusions. It is also important to set aside time at ACC sessions for executive heads to have informal exchanges of views about topical global issues and problems in order to develop a collective vision and/or set the stage for collective action in addressing them. Even where no specific conclusions could be reached, such exchanges serve to strengthen unity of purpose and nurture a corporate identity for the system, under the Secretary-General's guidance.

43. ACC recognized that the ongoing reform processes and the emphasis on "partnership" they share would enhance opportunities for joint or collaborative actions. ACC agreed to encourage and reinforce cooperative arrangements which utilize flexible, pragmatic and differentiated approaches that are needs-driven, time-bound and bring together groups of concerned agencies around specific activities or programmes, designed to bring their respective comparative advantages into play to enhance effectiveness . The "issues management" approach highlighted in the Secretary-General's reform programme is intended to be developed around these elements. In the same spirit, ACC welcomed the progress being made to enhance cooperation at the country level, where the impact of strengthened cooperative arrangements should have the greatest impact. It was generally felt that UNDAF provided a most useful instrumentality to this end, and should be geared to facilitate effective participation also on the part of agencies with no field representation. It was stressed in this context that

processes aimed at harmonizing the work of the system around common objectives must reflect the reality and substance of country-level situations so that appropriate use is made of all capacities available within the system. In the same context, ACC took note with appreciation of the ongoing work of CCPOQ on developing a comprehensive matrix of all the activities of the system contributing to poverty eradication, and called for a further refinement of this work.

44. With regard to relationships between the United Nations executive committees and the relevant inter-agency bodies, ACC noted that the executive committees are management mechanisms internal to the United Nations; the responsibilities of the ACC machinery and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee are quite different in nature and scope; coordination arrangements that commit the system can only be determined in the appropriate inter-agency bodies. There will, nevertheless, be issues that will continue to appear on the work programmes of both sets of bodies. It is important, in these cases, that there be clear channels of communication to ensure that each set of mechanisms addresses issues within the limits of its respective functions, and that the outcomes of these processes reinforce each other.

45. Turning to its interactions with intergovernmental bodies, ACC noted that in the United Nations itself, the Economic and Social Council is developing new approaches to its coordination function which build more systematically on the capacities and inputs of the agencies, both individually and collectively in ACC. This trend was warmly welcomed. It was, at the same time, considered important that agency governing bodies should feel that they also have a major stake in the coordination process. It was noted that one of the measures of ACC's effectiveness was the extent to which executive heads could take back to their governing bodies, from ACC, system-wide perspectives on issues before these bodies.

46. ACC members reiterated their readiness to further strengthen their participation in the Council's work in order to ensure that ACC and Council contributions to enhancing policy coherence in the system are mutually reinforcing. They also agreed to a renewed effort to engage their governing bodies more systematically on system-wide issues and concerns. ACC also considered that the system's policy coherence would be greatly enhanced through more effective policy coordination at the national level within the Governments concerned. Whenever possible and appropriate, ACC members should assist in promoting such coordination.

47. The need to associate more closely the business sector, labour unions, research institutions, foundations and non-governmental organizations with the work of the United Nations system was generally emphasized. In the same context, the importance was stressed of nurturing grass-roots support as a condition to ensure that the work of the system has lasting impact. As part of this effort, it was agreed that the capacity of the United Nations system to make the results of its work better known and to engage civil society, and to use the various channels and mechanisms available through them for this purpose, should be strengthened, as a priority objective.

G. Coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

48. During 1998, ACC continued to focus its attention on ensuring the follow-up to United Nations conferences and summits. ACC reviewed developments and follow-up actions on the outcome of conferences on the basis of presentations made by the concerned executive heads. Highlights of this review are as follows:

(a) Universal Declaration of Human Rights. ACC expressed satisfaction with the inter-agency collaborative process set in motion for the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration and the preparations for the five-year review of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Individual ACC members briefed the Committee on the steps that they are taking to mainstream human rights in their activities and on the way in which the relevant intergovernmental bodies are giving attention to human rights issues. ACC agreed that it is important to consider the best means of sharing available information within the system on human rights violations, as part of the system's commitment to the mainstreaming of human rights issues and to contributing to the further implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. ACC reiterated that the promotion of human rights is a core value of the system as a whole, and agreed on the need to develop standards and parameters against which the impact of the system's work in relation to human rights can be measured;

(b) International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). ACC noted the arrangements being made for convening a special session of the General Assembly (30 June–2 July 1999) for a review of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. ACC agreed with the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on the importance of the involvement of all ACC members and of all parts of the

United Nations system in the preparation of the five-year review. ACC was also briefed by the Executive Director of UNFPA on the ongoing work as well as on the round tables and technical meetings being held as part of the preparation. Regional reviews on implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action have been organized by the regional commissions, and this offers an excellent example of different parts of the United Nations system coming together to support each other in the implementation of the Programme of Action;

(c) Fourth World Conference on Women. ACC continued to give special attention to women and gender issues in the context of the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) and the Beijing Platform for Action. ACC's Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE) continues as the main force for promoting concerted follow-up to the Platform for Action. Through its task manager system, IACWGE is working on a review of the women in development/gender focal point function, the compilation of good practices on gender mainstreaming, methodologies for gender-sensitive budget codes, the compilation of a database on gender training materials, and developing methodologies for gender impact analysis. ACC was also briefed on "Women watch", the United Nations Internet gateway for information on the advancement and empowerment of women, which has now become an inter-agency project and has initiated pilot on-line conferences for various persons to participate in reviewing implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The "Women watch" website is providing easily accessible information on a wide range of related activities. IACWGE made a substantive contribution to the development of the ACC guidance note for the resident coordinator system on field-level follow-up to global conferences. ACC adopted a statement entitled "Gender equality and main streaming in the work of the United Nations system: a commitment to action", which underscores its continuing commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and gender-related recommendations of other major international conferences;

(d) International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR). ACC underlined the importance of ensuring follow-up to IDNDR. It welcomed the adoption at the Intergovernmental Conference on Emergency Telecommunications, held from 16 to 18 June 1998 at Tampere, Finland, of a new international convention which would help facilitate the use of the latest telecommunications equipment by humanitarian agencies and disaster response units in times of emergency. ACC adopted a statement on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (see ACC/1998/4, para. 44), in which it recognized that the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action, as adopted by the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, provides a platform for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) and for concerted joint action by the United Nations system and its specialized agencies. ACC also noted the actions taken by its members to bring the issue of disaster reduction to the attention of their executive bodies so as to elicit their support in the completion of the goals of IDNDR, and to consider taking a number of actions at the intergovernmental level;

(e) General Assembly special session concerning drugs. ACC was briefed by the Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) on the special session of the General Assembly devoted to the fight against the illicit production, sale, demand, traffic and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and related activities. In its resolution S-20/4, entitled "Measures to enhance international cooperation to counter the world drug problem", the Assembly set out specific actions to be taken by Member States and by UNDCP and called for UNDCP to play a catalytic role in mobilizing international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, United Nations organizations and the private sector for work on the drug problem and for assisting interested Governments. Subsequently, ACC issued a statement reaffirming the commitment of the system to coordinate its own response to the world drug problem in support of national efforts.

H. Assistance to countries invoking Article 50 of the Charter of the United Nations

49. At its fifty-second session, the General Assembly endorsed the proposal of the Secretary-General to convene an ad hoc expert group meeting in the first half of 1998 with a view to developing a possible methodology for assessing the consequences of preventive or enforcement actions on third States and to exploring innovative and practical measures of assistance to those States. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/162, an expert group meeting was convened in New York from 24 to 26 June 1998. The results of the expert group meeting are contained in the report of the Secretary-General on this topic (A/53/312).

50. The General Assembly, in its resolution 53/107, requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of, *inter alia*, organizations of the United Nations system regarding the report of the expert group meeting on developing a

methodology for assessing the consequences incurred by third States as a result of preventive or enforcement measures and on exploring innovative and practical measures of international assistance to affected States. In the same resolution, the Assembly also reaffirmed the important role of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Committee for Programme and Coordination in mobilizing and monitoring, as appropriate, the economic assistance efforts by the international community and the United Nations system to States confronted with special economic problems arising from the carrying out of preventive or enforcement measures imposed by the Security Council and, as appropriate, in identifying solutions to the special economic problems of those States, and decided to transmit the report of the ad hoc expert group meeting to the Council at its substantive session of 1999. By the same resolution, the General Assembly invited organizations of the United Nations system, among others, to address more specifically and directly, where appropriate, special economic problems of third States affected by sanctions imposed under Chapter VII of the Charter, and for this purpose to consider improving procedures for consultations to maintain a constructive dialogue with such States, including through regular and frequent meetings as well as, where appropriate, special meetings between the affected third States and the donor community, with the participation of United Nations agencies and other international organizations.

I. Administrative questions

1. Staff security and safety

51. Expressing concern over the increasing attacks and threats to United Nations system personnel and premises, ACC kept the question of staff security and safety high on its agenda during 1998. The issue was discussed at the high-level meeting of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) on 9 February 1998 and the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Meeting on Security held from 17 to 19 March 1998. The meetings considered, among other issues, financial provisions for security, including the establishment of separate budget lines for security in the budgets of United Nations system organizations; the setting up of a trust fund to supplement existing security funding mechanisms; security arrangements for local staff; security training; and strengthening the role of and increased support for the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator.

52. Acting on the recommendations of the two meetings, ACC called upon all organizations of the system to ensure that adequate funds are available within their budgets to fund staff security expenditures. It endorsed the proposal for the provision of security training on a mandatory basis to all staff members at high-risk duty stations. It also approved the establishment of a security trust fund by the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator, and expressed appreciation for countries that had contributed to the trust fund. ACC endorsed the institution of measures to ensure the security of locally recruited staff as well as the criteria to ensure minimum operational security standards. It also decided that matters regarding security of staff would continue to be addressed directly in ACC. It requested CCAQ to continue to give attention to the financial and budgetary aspects of staff security.

53. On the legal aspects of staff safety, ACC members decided to enhance their exchange of information on the legal protection of their staff, and requested the legal advisers of United Nations system organizations to continue to address the linkage between the physical safety of staff and the legal protections afforded by privileges and immunities.

54. In a joint statement on the subject, ACC members reiterated their call to host countries that the safety and security of United Nations system personnel is a non-negotiable issue, and that in the absence of decisive action by the host country, the United Nations system will act to withdraw staff or suspend operations. They urged all Member States to ensure that United Nations system personnel at all duty stations have access to the needed telecommunications equipment. They called on all Member States who have not done so to ratify the 1994 United Nations Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and the Convention on Privileges and Immunities of United Nations Staff.

2. International Civil Service Commission

55. A review by the General Assembly of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), including its mandate, membership and functioning, was among the proposals set out in the Secretary-General's reform programme (see A/53/950, para. 233). By its resolution 52/12 B, the General Assembly decided to examine a recommendation by the Secretary-General in this regard. A note by the Secretary-General (A/53/688) outlined proposed terms of reference for a high-level group to assist the General Assembly in conducting the review, and indicated that the Secretary-General intends to submit his recommendations concerning the membership of the group to the General Assembly at its resumed fifty-third session.

56. With regard to reporting on and monitoring the status of women in the United Nations system, ACC invited ICSC to identify in its reports best practices of those organizations that are more successful in increasing the representation of women.

3. Human resources management

57. Stressing the importance of strengthening human resources management of the United Nations system, CCAQ, on behalf of ACC, adopted a statement summarizing follow-up actions on a number of initiatives taken to upgrade human resource management across the United Nations system, together with indications of future actions to be taken (see ACC/1998/5, annex III).

III. Elements of the programme of work of ACC for 1999

58. In 1999, ACC will continue to address key policy issues requiring coordinated responses from the United Nations system. In particular, the work programme of ACC for 1999 will involve a comprehensive assessment of the challenges posed to public policy and to national and international systems by the current global environment. In examining the wide range of issues under this theme, ACC will seek to reach a shared definition of the main challenges ahead for the United Nations system, the key common objectives around which Member States should be engaged on a priority basis, and the new or strengthened partnerships that the system needs to respond to those challenges.

59. The Secretary-General has indicated that he will draw on this process of reflection to prepare his report for the Millennium Assembly. The governing bodies of several agencies are planning to use their sessions in the year 2000 to assess their experience and set out commitments for meeting the challenges of the new millennium. ACC members will be exchanging views and information to ensure a system-wide vision of tasks ahead and to develop common or mutually supportive approaches to address them.

60. As part of its continuing efforts to enhance its functioning and that of its subsidiary machinery, ACC will give renewed attention to strengthening the process of dialogue, consultations and cooperation within the system through, *inter alia*, the increased use of information and communication technologies. The Committee will also continue to introduce innovations and improvements in the methods of work of its subsidiary machinery, including increased interface between the main committees.

61. ACC will continue to focus on issues relating to African development and the system-wide follow-up to the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of a durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318). In the same context, ACC will continue to review progress achieved through the United Nations system-wide initiative on Africa. The main aim will be to enhance complementarity among the various initiatives undertaken within the United Nations system and to further strengthen synergies and the overall impact of the United Nations system's contribution to peace-building and development.

62. ACC will continue to address the integrated and coordinated follow-up to global conferences and summits. It will keep under review the preparations for the General Assembly special session on a five-year review of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. It will also consider the contributions of the United Nations system to the preparatory process for the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development.